



Department of Justice

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PICKERINGTON FATHER AND SON PLEAD GUILTY TO ROLES IN FRAUDULENT CREDIT CARD DEBT ELIMINATION SCHEME

COLUMBUS – Chad Wickline, age 34, and his father, Dan Wickline, age 61, both of Pickerington, pleaded guilty in United States District Court here today to selling a credit card debt-elimination scheme that defrauded customers out of hundreds of thousands of dollars in 2004.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Jose A. Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Criminal Investigation; and Gerald O'Farrell, Assistant Inspector in Charge, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, announced the pleas entered today before United States District Judge Algenon L. Marbley.

According to a statement of facts filed with the plea agreement, Chad and Dan Wickline became involved in a conspiracy with others to launder money obtained by fraud through a company named Liberty Resources that marketed a credit card debt elimination scheme over the Internet.

Liberty Resources' Website contained numerous false and fraudulent representations designed to lure people into enrolling in the company's debt elimination program. For a fee, participants received a document claiming that they were relieved from their credit card debt. Investigators determined, however, that not one customer successfully eliminated their credit card debt using the program. Clients reported that their credit history as destroyed when they discontinued paying their credit card balances and the card issuers sued them for payment. Many had to file for bankruptcy.

Both men pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. Chad Wickline also pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud.

Under the terms of their plea agreements, Dan Wickline faces a prison sentence of between 12 and 18 months imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release, payment of taxes along with interest and penalties on money he received from the program, and restitution to the victims in the amount of \$229,958.29.

Chad Wickline faces a prison sentence of between 24 and 30 months imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release, payment of taxes along with interest and penalties on money he received, and restitution to his victims in the amount of \$388,056.01.

A federal grand jury indicted the men in May, 2007 and their trial began on June 25.

Lockhart commended the joint investigation by special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation and inspectors with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorneys Marcia J. Harris and Dan Brown, who prosecuted the case.

Judge Marbley will set a date for sentencing.

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